1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6



of the districts mentioned, the forests are not of such a nature as to lend themselves, in the near future, to profitable exploitation. Neither is there any ground for supposing that in the interior of the Chaco, where the soil in the greater part consists of loess-like strata, there is any prospect of finding any valuable minerals, or any other important products of nature. The great possibilities for cattle-ranching that exist in certain parts of this region, will, however, probably facilitate its colonization. If, contrary to expectation, gold-bearing ground, for instance, were discovered on the Chaco, even those parts of the »great hunting ground» that are most difficult of access would, no doubt, before long be explored.

And it was precisely the thirst for gold and silver that first led white men into the Chaco. The Portuguese, Alejo Garcia, and some countrymen companions were the first whites who visited this region. About 1520 these adventurers, at the head of an army numbering some 2,000 Guarani Indians, marched right across the Chaco, from Rio Paraguay to the Andes, and invaded Peru. From the Indians of Rio Paraguay, Garcia had heard rumours of that country, and of its wealth in gold and silver, and it was covetousness of these precious metals that was the motive force in the hazardous and arduous march through the Chaco. Baron Nordenskiöld has established that this expedition was probably made some year, or years, before Pizarro's arrival in Peru, and that thus Garcia and his companions probably were the first Europeans who obtained personal knowledge of the ancient Inca kingdom.[1]

Although the Gran Chaco, as we have seen, was visited by white men at the beginning of the 16th century, it was only in the latter years of last century that any detailed and reliable information became obtainable of the more inaccessible parts of this region. The French explorer, J. Crevaux,[2] who intended to make extensive research of the country and population around the Pilcomayo, was given no opportunity of carrying out his plan, for, already at the outset of his expedition, in 1882, he was murdered by Chaco Indians, probably members of the Choroti, as well as the Toba, tribe. Another French explorer, Thouar, has described a journey across the Chaco.[3] The Norwegian, Lieutenant Storm, has published important observations from two expeditions of his on the

[1] Nordenskiöld (10), p. 46 et seq.
[2] Crevaux (1), pp. XIII—XVI.
[3] Thouar (1).

Mataco SI7
Choroti SK6

M /320 cont./

771 They have a vague idea of superior beings, whom they fear
776 without worshiping them; the cleverest one becomes the sorcerer
756 and exploits the poverty of his companions, especially today when
648 they are earning money from the whites, to whom they lend im-
464 portant services.

M They frequently move from the region that they occupy to
167 the Argentine Republic; they work, dress, learn some Spanish
177 and a slight smattering of civilization, and return to their lands to live as before.

Choroti

Ci The zone located southeast of Toba territory is occupied
131 by the Choroti Indians, who have their own language. They
197 occupy the geographic degree 22° 30' latitude and 64° 10' longitude, on the left bank of the Pilcomayo River.

Ci They are quite numerous and peaceful, and they are not
181 treacherous like their neighbors, the Toba. Nevertheless, they
648 inspire respect in all the neighboring tribes; if a mission were to be established at said degree, the conquest of all the Bolivian territory /321/ up to 24° would be accomplished without the need of so many small forts, which are such a great expense to the Nation and which do not create centers of trade and civilization.

Ci Father Gianelli in years past visited the Choroti Indians,
797 was received with displays of affection and appreciation, and
177 found among them good inclinations toward becoming civilized, but at that time the harvest was too much for so few evangelical workers.

Ci The Choroti are not so lazy and savage as the other tribes;
181 they devote themselves to the cultivation of a few seeds and to
241 the raising of cattle, although on a small scale. They are also
231 hunters, however, and when they occupy the banks of the
224 Pilcomayo, they take advantage of the fruits the river brings them, especially in the great floods.

Choroti SK6
Mataco SI7
Güisnais

Ci /321 cont./

301 Doubtless through being very close to the Toba, they
302 pierce their ear lobes, in which they put pieces of wood, and
171 they also stain their faces.

Ci In the expeditions to the Paraguay they have never shown
648 themselves to be hostile to the whites and soldiers; rather they
[464] have lent important services and it was they who saved the life of Señor Touvar and his companions when they became separated from the expedition. Therefore the reduction of these Indians to civilized life would be very profitable.

## Güisnáis

M These Indians occupy the western bank of the Pilcomayo
131 facing the Choroti Indians and southwest of the region occupied
101 by the Mataco. The geographic degree of their territory, with a very slight difference, is the same as that of the Choroti, since they are separated from the latter only by the river bed.

M They are a division of the Mataco; they speak the latter's
101 language with very little difference; their customs are nearly
181 identical and their number quite small. They are of a peaceful
241 nature like the Choroti, and like them, they plant gourds and
231 other vegetables. They also devote themselves to the raising of
197 domestic animals, such as cows, horses, sheep, goats, and chickens.

M Even the Güisnáis frequently come out for jobs in the
167 Argentine Republic, from where they also bring back weapons,
177 in order to use them particularly in the woods, killing birds, wild
464 boars, deer, and other quadrupeds.
224 They have more religious ideas than other tribes, and it

M seems that their great-grandparents might have belonged to
174 some former Argentine mission, because, more than others, they
771 recognize a true divinity. /322/ Nonetheless in their great
776 ignorance they confuse ideas, and in great fear they recognize in
[756] sorcerers a power that they do not have.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK 6



M 114

of a ford. Those Chaco Indians who live beside the river, clever swimmers as they are, possess great experience and dexterity in performing such tasks and in fact, no white traveller in the Chaco could easily do without their services. At the fordable place where we crossed to the other side the water was so low that men and animals had to swim only a short distance, our clothes being taken over in a big cow's hide folded up so as to form a sort of vessel. Within half an hour we were all safely on the other side of the river and could continue our journey.

T [101]

The Bolivian sub-tribes of the great Toba nation inhabit the region between fort d'Orbigny in the south and the village Villa Montes (Mission of San Francisco), situated about twenty leagues to the north, on the left bank of the Pilcomayo. I proposed to visit these Indians later on. For the present my destination was the country of the Choroti which lies about midway between the fort d'Orbigny and the next Bolivian military station on the Pilcomayo, Guachalla. To reach the first Choroti village I had to travel about eight leagues along the narrow path which — in the main following the river but at times retiring far from it — runs from d'Orbigny in a southerly direction. This path is in some places almost obliterated, especially when it leads through the plains, and for the traveller there is the frequent risk of losing it, in which case he may easily go astray in the wilds.

C 648

It was in the beginning of December that I first made the acquaintance of the Choroti in their own land. These Indians are now what the Bolivians call *indios mansos* (tame Indians) and there is no danger for a white man in visiting them. The few white settlers on the Pilcomayo have very seldom had any trouble with the Choroti, who — in contrast to the arrogant Tobas — are a peaceful people. A *kilai* (the name given every white man) is therefore kindly received if he himself treats the Indians well and does not arrive empty-handed. So it was with Nordenskiöld during his stay among the Choroti, and so it was with me. It is not possible to live among the Chaco Indians without bringing articles of exchange, and for my own part I had a good supply of such things. Among these were not only shirts, needles, thread, small mirrors, glass beads etc., but above all tobacco which is the article most appreciated by these Indians. Tobacco in fact is a sort of tribute which everybody must pay who travels in the Chaco and has to deal with the natives. Every male member of the small community whose guest I was had to receive his share — of course only a small quantity, just enough to fill the pipe a couple of times — and the gift had to be repeated every day. The Choroti

C 574 276

2. Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SK6



necessity of fishing also at that time compels them to stay near the river. But as soon as the rainy season sets in and the algaroba, tusca, and other fruits begin to ripen, the Indians take up their abode in the forest close by some small lagoon or a rare water-hole several leagues from the river, spending most of their »summer» time in drinking algaroba beer, feasting, and dancing. The Indians of the Guachalla region form the main bulk of the Choroti tribe and number about a thousand individuals. Their immediate neighbours in the south are the Ashluslay, to whom the Choroti are closely related in their culture. There is much communication between the two tribes and intermarriage is frequent. Thus the chief of the Choroti, the old Ātamo, was on his father's side of Ashluslay descent, but since mother-right prevails among the Chaco Indians, he had become a member of the Choroti tribe.

There seems to be a certain antagonism between the different Choroti tribes, in consequence of which they have very little intercourse with one another. I particularly noticed such an antagonism between those Choroti who live on the river and those living in the interior. It would have been impossible for me to get a guide among the people of the chief Toula to accompany me to Anempä's tribe. Since to these Indians, who in general live to a great extent by fishing, the possession of the river is of great importance, I suppose it is originally due to this enmity that some Choroti Indians have settled in the inhospitable regions in the interior where they are found to-day. These latter even speak a somewhat different dialect of the Choroti language. Thus, one of the commonest words in the language, the word for 'house', is in the dialect of the river Indians *uk*, in the dialect of the inland Indians again *sáuo*.

The Choroti living on the river call the Choroti tribe inhabiting the interior of the Chaco *Asówa*.

The total number of the Choroti I estimate at about 2,000 or a little more.[1] The surrounding tribes are much larger. Of these I have already mentioned the southern neighbours of the Choroti, the Ashluslay, whom the Choroti call *Ahle*. Their neighbours in the north are the Tobas, whom they call *Johlōki*, and another Chaco tribe, the Tapiete, whom they call *Ohuénik*. Their neighbours in the west again are the Mataco, whom the Choroti call *Hotenúk*. They have dealings with all these tribes, although at times they have been at war with them, or at

[1]) Consequently, when Nordenskiöld estimates the Choroti at 4,000 individuals, this is a great exaggeration.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6



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least with the Mataco. The Choroti also very much fear the powerful and ferocious Tobas and do not like to pass through their country.

Having finished my studies of the Choroti Indians, I left at the beginning of April for Yacuiba to prepare for my next Chaco expedition, when I proposed to visit the Tobas. Since I could not cross the river which was still swollen by the rains, I decided to return to Yacuiba through the village of Villa Montes (Mission of San Francisco), situated about thirty leagues to the north of d'Orbigny, on the bank of the Pilcomayo. From this village it is a journey of nearly three days to Yacuiba. A narrow riding-path, which in the main follows the course of the river, takes the traveller up to Villa Montes through the dense forests bordering the banks of the Pilcomayo in this region. The typical Chaco scenery disappears as one approaches the cordilleras. The village itself is situated on the very border of the Chaco, at the point where the Pilcomayo leaves the mountains.

A journey like this is very difficult and even dangerous during the rainy season. In many places the primitive riding-path had been completely destroyed by the strong current of the swollen river. Every now and then large pieces of the river bank were detached and plunged into the water with a tremendous rumble, carrying with them giant trees and bushes. In such places the traveller had to cut a new path through the thickets of the virgin forest for himself and his horse, which of course was often connected with great difficulties. It is easy to understand that in this way the Pilcomayo has undergone considerable changes in the course of time. As is shown by old river-beds, the river has several times even taken another course.

T
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These regions are inhabited mainly by Toba Indians, and on my journey to Villa Montes I passed through some of their villages. Since these Tobas are comparatively easy of access, I decided to stay among them on my second Chaco expedition.

In Yacuiba I was obliged to stay for more than one month, so it was not until the middle of May that I could again leave for the Chaco. Passing through the little village of Caiza to Villa Montes, which became my head-quarters for the next six months, I settled in a Toba village about eight leagues to the south of this place, visiting later on the more distant Toba tribes. Although the Tobas have had a bad reputation — among other things these savages killed the explorer Crevaux — I was received by them in quite a friendly manner. In regard to the language, I had in the beginning the same difficulties as among the Choroti. The two

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK 7



In disposition the three tribes show great differences. The *Choroti* are pleasant and cheerful, and display to a high degree that humorous spirit which is often characteristic of the Indian even when he looks serious. They are lazy and carefree and love amusement, feasting, dancing, and games above everything. When the Choroti Indian has plenty of food and algaroba beer for the moment, he makes merry and eats and drinks as much as he can, but has no thought for the morrow and does not store provisions like the more advanced Chaco tribes. This particularly holds true of the men; the women, who in general are more industrious, show more forethought in this respect, collecting wild fruits in great quantities when they are in season, and keeping the seed-corn till the following sowing. But on the whole poverty is an outstanding feature of the material culture of the Choroti, and this is no doubt due to a great extent to their own character.

The Choroti are — at least nowadays — a peaceful people, and in the insignificant wars they have sometimes waged with the Mataco on the other side of the river, they have manifested very little organization or discipline. As I was told by settlers on the Pilcomayo, the Choroti were formerly more warlike, and like other Chaco tribes, they were even in the habit of scalping those enemies whom they killed during their raids.

The *Mataco*, although anthropologically closely related to the Choroti, differ from them considerably in character. The Mataco Indian is serious, taciturn, and gloomy, and in consequence more addicted to religion and superstition than his brother the Choroti Indian. At least nowadays, when the Indians are strongly influenced by European civilization, the Mataco Indian will not make a reliable servant and companion. Cleanliness is not a particular characteristic of the Choroti, but the Mataco are probably the dirtiest of all Chaco tribes. This too may in part be a consequence of their contact with the whites. On the other hand, the Mataco are more industrious and energetic than the Choroti, and accordingly, in their wars, have proved more valiant and capable of more organization than their primitive neighbours. In these respects the Mataco, at any rate the Bolivian tribes, resemble their neighbours the Tobas more than the Choroti.

As to the *Tobas*, their moral qualities and disposition have been described with much unanimity by many travellers. Nearly all have characterized them as bad, ferocious, treacherous, thievish, etc., qualities which they have especially displayed towards the whites. Typical on